



## ACTDU Competition Rules (2024 Revision)

### Table of Contents

1. Definitions	2
2. General	2
3. Code of Conduct	3
4. Eligibility	3
5. Teams	4
6. Competitions	5
6.5. Speaking Times	5
6.6. Points of information	5
7. Supervision	6
8. Prepared Debates	6
9. Impromptu Debates	6
10. Finals	7
11. The draw	7
12. The topics	8
13. Postponement	9
14. Forfeits	10
15. Adjudicators	10

## 1. Definitions

**ACTDU Competitions** refers to any school debating competition administered by the ACTDU, including but not limited to the current Junior Open, Intermediate Open, Advanced Open, Junior Premier, Intermediate Premier, and Advanced Premier.

**ACTDU Executive** refers to the ACTDU President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary.

**Advanced Competition** refers to the ACTDU competition catering to the most senior age-group in a given semester, including but not limited to the current Advanced Open and Advanced Premier competitions.

**Code of Conduct** refers to the code of conduct as set out in rule 3 of these rules.

**Duty Officer** refers to the convenor in charge of administering an ACTDU competition.

**Impromptu Debate** refers to a debate where the teams only receive the topic an hour in advance of the debate commencing.

**Information Slide** refers to a set of information provided to help students debate a particular impromptu debate topic.

**Iron-Person** refers to when one speaker on a team delivers two speeches during a debate, due to the absence of the other speakers.

**Junior Competition** refers to the ACTDU competition catering to the youngest age-group in a given semester, including but not limited to the current Junior Open and Fictional Worlds competitions.

**Participant** refers to anyone involved in any ACTDU competition in any capacity.

**Point of Information** refers to short questions offered to the other team while a member of their team is speaking.

**Prepared Debate** refers to a debate where the teams receive the topic a week in advance of the debate commencing.

**Intermediate Competition** refers to the ACTDU competition catering to the middle age-group (between the Junior Competition and the Advanced Competition) in a given semester, including but not limited to the current Intermediate Open and Intermediate Premier.

**Top 10** refers to the top 10 highest performing speakers in a given competition, as announced at the grand final of that competition.

## 2. General

2.1. Participants in ACTDU Competitions must adhere to the Competition Rules.

2.2. The most important priority of ACTDU is increasing inclusivity and accessibility of debating. This is our main objective in running school debating competitions.

2.3. The ACTDU retain discretion to operate in contravention of these rules, or allow exemptions to these rules, where it believes it is the most appropriate choice to do so, having regard to the safety, fairness, accessibility and quality of our competitions.

### **3. Code of Conduct**

3.1. Participants must behave in accordance with this code of conduct, or risk being removed from the competition.

3.2. The code of conduct applies to all students, coaches, teachers, adjudicators, Duty Officers and ACTDU Executive throughout the competitions and in all email, phone and online communications.

3.3. ACTDU aims to foster a positive, respectful and enjoyable environment at all programs and competitions. As such, the code of conduct is intended to ensure that all participants feel safe and comfortable.

3.4. Participants must behave respectfully towards all other participants.

3.5. Participants must respect that ACTDU is inclusive of a wide range of ages, debating levels and experience, and must refrain from making comments or behaving in a way that is dismissive of a team or speaker due to their age, skill or experience level.

3.6. Participants must refrain from heckling their opposition, laughing loudly, or behaving in any way that may be construed as rude or offensive. Participants must not try to intimidate or threaten their opponents in any way.

3.7. Participants must refrain from making statements that may be construed as racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic or otherwise discriminatory.

3.8. Participants must behave respectfully towards their adjudicator. If a team would like to file a complaint against an adjudicator, they must follow formal processes. While questions about explanations, feedback, or the debate are encouraged, under no circumstances should teams, coaches, parents, or any spectator openly confront the adjudicator about the correctness of their decision. The decision of an adjudicator is final, and cannot be appealed.

3.9. Participants must refrain from any other behaviours that cause or may cause other participants to feel unsafe or uncomfortable.

3.10. If a participant is found, or suspected, to be in violation of this code of conduct, the relevant Duty Officer and ACTDU Executive may take any steps they deem necessary to preserve the safety and inclusion of all participants, including but not limited to:

- Undertaking further investigations regarding a particular incident.
- Issuing a caution.
- Issuing a temporary ban on a participant for a set number of rounds.
- Banning a participant from the rest of the tournament.

## ACTDU Competition Rules

- Banning a participant from future tournaments.
- Contacting the staff or administration of schools.
- Contacting the police.

### **4. Eligibility**

- 4.1.**A team will not be eligible to compete in the ACTDU competitions unless all students on the team satisfy the eligibility requirements stated in these rules, or unless an application for exemption has been made to the relevant Duty Officer and ACTDU Executive, and an exemption has been granted.
- 4.2.**A student may only represent the school in which they are currently enrolled.
- 4.3.**A student may only compete in a competition if they are currently in the relevant or lower year level/s of that competition.
- 4.4.**Teams must comply with the team rules stated at rule 5 below.
- 4.5.**Where a team is found to be in breach of the eligibility rules during the course of the competition (and where an exemption has not been granted) that team will not be eligible to compete in the finals.
- 4.6.**Applications for exemption must be made in writing to the ACTDU Executive at least one week prior to the commencement of the relevant competition.
- This requirement may be waived in extenuating circumstances, at the discretion of the Executive.
- 4.7.**In the interest of fairness, the ACTDU Executive will err on the side of not granting exemptions, unless particularly unique or extenuating circumstances apply.
- 4.8.**In considering an application for exemption, the relevant Duty Officer and ACTDU Executive will have regard to:
- Unique circumstances of the school, for example, whether the school has enough students to enter a team in each competition.
  - Unique circumstance of the student, for example, whether a student has particular health requirements that mean they cannot commit to participating every week.
  - Any other factors deemed relevant by the Executive.

### **5. Teams**

- 5.1.**Teams are to comprise a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 5 members.
- 5.2.**In any given debate, only 3 members are allowed to give speeches.
- 5.3.**A fourth member of the team may assist in preparation time.
- 5.4.**The fourth member however cannot sit at the bench with the team. Instead, if Affirmative, a fourth member will be the Chair of the debate, facilitating the proceedings by reading the provided script and announcing the Topic, Adjudicator, Teams, and then speakers of the debate. If Negative, this speaker will be the Timekeeper of the debate, providing the relevant

indications of time throughout the debate. The Chairperson will sit closer to the Negative team and the Timekeeper closer to the Affirmative.

**5.5.** If a team does not have a fourth person during the debate, any member of the audience may fill in the Chairperson/ Timekeeper role. If there is only one fourth person between the two teams, this person may do both roles during the debate if comfortable. If there is no one to fill these roles, the adjudicator will do so instead.

**5.6.** A team may substitute one member of other teams from the same or lower year level to fill in if a member of the team is away for a given round.

**5.7.** If there are circumstances that mean there are only two speakers available, that team may 'Iron-Person' the round.

**5.8.** Rule 5.6 is a rule that must be followed in good faith; teams should not bring in better speakers in order to gain a competitive advantage and should only do it when it is necessary to fielding a team for the debate. If the ACTDU Executive or Duty Officer believe this rule is being exploited, they may intervene to seek a justification for the necessity of substitutes.

**5.9.** While delivering a speech, that speaker is not permitted to receive notes, verbal advice, or gestures from anyone, including other team members, coaches, parents, or the audience. This does not apply to adjudicators.

## **6. Competitions**

**6.1.** No student, team or school is automatically entitled to participate in the ACTDU Competitions. The ACTDU retain ultimate discretion to deny participation to any potential participant, having regard to the safety, fairness and accessibility of all other participants.

**6.2.** Each competition will have a fixed number of preliminary rounds determined in advance by the ACTDU Executive.

**6.3.** Where there is an odd number of teams in a competition, one team will have a 'bye' each week.

**6.4.** The speaker scores of speakers will not be released to anybody, in any form, at any point in the competition. This includes students, parents, teachers or coaches. It includes specific scores from certain debates, averages from across the competition, or rankings within the competition (beyond the 'Top 10'). This rule applies during and after the competition has concluded. This rule also applies to any speakers announced as the 'Top 10' speakers of a competition.

### **6.5. Speaking Times**

**6.5.1.** Speaking times in the Junior competitions are to be 3-4 minutes in length. The adjudicator will clap once at 3 minutes and twice at 4 minutes. There will be a continuous clap at 4 minutes and 15 seconds, at which time the speaker should conclude.

## ACTDU Competition Rules

- 6.5.2. Speaking times in the Intermediate competitions are to be 5-6 minutes in length. The adjudicator will clap once at 5 minutes and twice at 6 minutes. There will be a continuous clap at 6 minutes and 15 seconds, at which time the speaker should conclude.
- 6.5.3. Speaking times in the Advanced competitions are to be 7-8 minutes in length. The adjudicator will clap once at 7 minutes and twice at 8 minutes. There will be a continuous clap at 8 minutes and 15 seconds, at which time the speaker should conclude.

### **6.6. Points of information**

- 6.6.1. Points of information may be offered in the Intermediate and Advanced competitions.
- 6.6.2. Points of information are short questions or statements directed to the other team. They should be offered by standing up and saying 'point of information'.
- 6.6.3. Points of information should not be longer than 15 seconds.
- 6.6.4. Speakers should not badger other speakers by offering points of information without waiting 15-20 seconds.
- 6.6.5. Speakers have discretion to refuse or accept as many points of information as they like. It is recommended that speakers accept 2-3 points of information per speech.
- 6.6.6. In Intermediate competitions, points of information may only be offered after 1 minute and before 5 minutes in the speech.
- 6.6.7. In Advanced competitions, points of information may only be offered after 1 minute and before 7 minutes in the speech.

## **7. Supervision**

- 7.1. The Duty Officer does not attend the competition as a supervisor. They have numerous other priorities including topic release, complaint resolution and other tasks relating to administering the competition and running the evening. They may need to leave the venue to pick up adjudicators or food. Schools may not rely on the Duty Officer or any ACTDU staff to supervise their students.
- 7.2. It is expected that each school nominate a responsible adult to attend any given round of the competition as a supervisor of their school's students. This may include a coach, debating coordinator, teacher, or willing parent.
- 7.3. Where issues relating to participant conduct arise, the ACTDU can expect that the participants in question were being supervised by their school. Schools may not rely on a lack of supervision as an excuse not to cooperate with disciplinary action by the ACTDU.

## **8. Prepared Debates**

## ACTDU Competition Rules

**8.1.**A competition will have as many or as few prepared debates as the Duty Officers and ACTDU Executive see fit.

**8.2.**Prepared rounds will take place at the start of each competition.

**8.3.**The topic for prepared debates will be released to teams 1 week before the debate is scheduled to occur.

**8.4.**Teams and coaches are permitted to assist teams in preparing for prepared topics.

**8.5.**Teams may use external resources in prepared debates.

## **9. Impromptu Debates**

**9.1.**The topic for impromptu debates will be released 1 hour before the debate is scheduled to begin.

**9.2.**Impromptu rounds will provide teams with a choice of three topics. For the Junior Competitions, it is at the discretion of the Duty Officer as to whether they provide three topics or one topic. Whether one or three topics are provided does not have to be consistent between standard and finals rounds.

**9.3.**Topic selection will be conducted in the following manner: each team will individually preference the topics out of 3, with (1) being the topic they most want to debate, and (3) being an automatic veto. Teams must write down their preferences. They will then compare their preference with their opposing team. If both teams have the same topic preferenced (1), they will debate that topic. If both teams have different topics preferenced (3), they will debate the only remaining topic. If both teams have the same topic preferenced (3), and different first (1) preferences, the duty officer will toss a coin and the affirmative team gets to call either 'Heads' or 'Tails'. If the coin toss lands in the Affirmative team's favour, the topic will be the Affirmative team's first preference and if not, it will be the Negative team's first preference.

**9.4.**Teams must be present 1 hour before their debate is scheduled to begin to receive the topic.

**9.5.**If a team is not present at the time of topic release, the opposing team will choose the topic. Where one or two members of a team are present at the time of topic release, only they are allowed to participate in topic selection - they may not call the remaining member(s) of their team.

**9.6.**If a team is not present at the time of topic release, the opposing team will begin prep as scheduled. Should the missing team arrive, they will have however long is left before the scheduled debate time to prepare. If they do not arrive, or if they choose to forfeit, the remaining team will be awarded an automatic win and be offered the opportunity to debate an adjudicator, subject to the discretion of the Duty Officer.

**9.7.**No external resources may be used during preparation time. This includes phones, computers or any written materials.

## ACTDU Competition Rules

- 9.8.** Teams may not speak to coaches, teachers, adjudicators or other students during preparation time.
- 9.9.** Any use of external resources or consulting with any other people may result in a penalty of a forfeit of the debate or the team becoming ineligible to debate in the finals rounds, subject to the discretion of the ACTDU Executive and Duty Officers.
- 9.10.** If a team is unsure about the meaning of a word in the topic, they may (and should) consult the Duty Officer.
- 9.11.** There may be an information slide provided for impromptu topics.

## 10. Finals

- 10.1.** The number of finals rounds will be determined by the size of the competition and discretion by the ACTDU Executive and Duty Officers. A minimum of 15% and a maximum of 25% of teams must be included in the finals.
- 10.2.** A team is only eligible to compete in the finals if they have complied with all rules stated in this document for the duration of the tournament, unless exempted by ACTDU.
- 10.3.** A team is not eligible to compete in the finals if they have competed as an ‘Iron-Person’ team for more than two preliminary rounds of the competition.
- 10.4.** Only the official members of the team may compete in a final.
- 10.5.** A team may ‘Iron-Person’ a final, but permission must be sought from the Duty Officer and ACTDU Executive prior to the debate beginning with justifications or explanations as to why the team could not compete otherwise.

## 11. The draw

- 11.1.** The draw for the first preliminary round of each competition will be randomly generated.
- 11.2.** “The draw for the remaining preliminary rounds will be a “bracket”, where teams with the same number of wins compete against each other.
- The ACTDU retains discretion to change the system of draw allocation as they see fit.
- 11.3.** The side (either affirmative or negative) that a team speaks on for the preliminary rounds will be randomly allocated, with an aim of having every team speaking on each side a roughly equal number of times throughout the competition.
- 11.4.** The draw for the finals rounds will be a “fold”, where the top team in the finals will debate the bottom-ranked team, the second-ranked team will debate the second-bottom, and so on.
- 11.5.** The side (either affirmative or negative) that a team speaks on for the final rounds will be either randomly allocated or determined through a coin toss, at the discretion of the Duty Officer.



**11.6.** Where a team has misread the draw, and prepared the wrong side of the topic, the team that was incorrect may be granted an additional 15 minutes to prepare the correct side of the motion.

## **12. The topics/motions**

**12.1.** The ACTDU Executive and Duty Officers determine the topics to be debated by the students.

**12.2.** The topics are typically selected from those which have been set at other competitions, including the National Schools Debating Championship, The World Schools Debating Championship, The Australian Intervarsity Debating Championship, topics set in other Australian Schools competitions, and topics set in other university competitions. This is in combination with topics that the ACTDU Executive and Duty Officers write themselves. Motions selected are those that Duty Officers think are interesting, useful for development, or worthwhile in any other sense.

**12.3.** In selecting a topic, the Executive and Duty Officers regard a number of considerations, including but not limited to, the balance of the topic, the range of ideas and potential arguments that could be made about the topic, the accessibility of the topic, the theme of the topic, the current relevancy of the topic, and whether a similar topic has been debated recently.

**12.4.** The ACTDU endeavours to set topics that cover a range of different ideas that may be interesting to different students, and in line with typical debating practice. These themes include, but are not limited to, politics, international relations, economics, education, justice, social justice, feminism and pop culture.

**12.5.** The plausibility of a topic is not relevant. Teams are to debate whether or not a particular topic is worthwhile, not whether or not it is possible.

**12.6.** The semantics of a topic are not significant. For the purpose of debating, there is no difference between the word 'would' or 'should' in a topic. The debate "That we should ban school uniforms" and "That we would ban school uniforms" is the same debate. If a team is unsure the meaning of a particular word, they should seek clarification with the Duty Officer.

**12.7.** In line with typical debating practice, the ACTDU endeavours to phrase topics such that the negative team are arguing for the status quo, and the affirmative team are arguing for a change to the status quo. Topics phrased in this way are not double-negatives or incorrectly written topics. The debate that "We would not incarcerate non-violent criminals" is not the same as the debate "We would incarcerate violent criminals". The latter is a status-quo affirmative, and does not make clear exactly what change to the status quo the opposing team should argue.

**12.8.** Once a topic has been set for an impromptu debate, it cannot be changed. This is regardless of any issues that may have arisen from the topic. This is because once teams in the first round of the night have been affected by a particular topic, it is not fair for teams in the remaining rounds to be advantaged by a change of topic.

**12.9.**Where teams are required to select a topic among a set of three for an impromptu debate, this is to be done in accordance with rule 9.3. Importantly, teams must write their preferences down.

**12.10.**Where a team has prepared the incorrect topic, the written preferences are to be consulted. If it is clear that one team is incorrect per the written preferences, the incorrect team will be granted an additional 15 minutes to prepare the correct topic. Where both teams were incorrect, or the preferences were not written down, both teams will be granted an additional 15 minutes to prepare the third motion that neither team prepared.

- It remains at the discretion of the Duty Officer to choose a different solution in these circumstances if they deem it necessary, in the interests of fairness and efficiency.

### **13. Postponement**

**13.1.**If a team is unable to debate at their scheduled time or day, they must inform the Duty Officer.

**13.2.**Teams are not automatically entitled to a rescheduled debate if they cannot attend.

**13.3.**If there is sufficient notice the Duty Officer will endeavour to arrange an alternative day for the debate to take place. The debate will be held at one of the other ACTDU competition venues and times. The debate must take place before the next round of that competition, i.e. a Junior debate may be rescheduled to the Intermediate or Advanced competition in that same week.

**13.4.**Schools cannot arrange their own make-up debates at their own times. All debates must be adjudicated by an ACTDU accredited adjudicator, or they will not count towards the competition.

**13.5.**If alternative arrangements cannot be made, the team that could not attend at the originally scheduled time forfeits the debate.

**13.6.**If a team does not notify the Duty Officer of their intention to postpone (or forfeit) by 1pm on the day of the debate, the school will be charged a \$35 fee, which will be invoiced to them at the end of the semester. This is to cover the cost of the adjudicator who must be paid for attending despite no longer having a debate to adjudicate, and who will adjudicate the debate at the postponed time.

### **14. Forfeits**

**14.1.**If a team intends to forfeit their debate, they must inform the Duty Officer.

**14.2.**A forfeit is considered a 'loss' for the purposes of the draw.

**14.3.**The team who was scheduled to debate the team which forfeited is given a 'win' for the purposes of the draw.

**14.4.**The team who was scheduled to debate the team which forfeited does not need to attend the round, where sufficient notice is given.

**14.5.** If a forfeit only becomes apparent at the round (ie the forfeiting team has not shown up) the team who was scheduled to debate the team which forfeited may choose to debate the adjudicator, have a training session with the adjudicator, or go home.

**14.6.** If a team does not notify the Duty Officer of their intention to forfeit by 3pm on the day of the debate, the school will be charged a \$30 fee, which will be invoiced to them at the end of the semester. This is to cover the cost of the adjudicator who must be paid for attending despite no longer having a debate to adjudicate.

## **15. Adjudicators**

**15.1.** The Adjudicator's decision is final.

**15.2.** Abuse of adjudicators or their decision-making is not tolerated.

**15.3.** Where possible, an adjudicator will not adjudicate a debate if there may be any bias for a particular team. This includes former schools that the adjudicator attended, teams that have been coached by the adjudicator, or students that the adjudicator is close friends or family with. The first two types of 'bias' will be deemed to expire upon a year after the adjudicator has left the school or coaching position.

- While the Duty Officers will strive to avoid any potential bias in adjudicator allocation, this rule only applies where possible, and adjudicators may adjudicate debates where there may be potential 'bias' if the Duty Officers and ACTDU Executive believe it is the most appropriate allocation, with regard to the fairness and quality of the allocation.

**15.4.** Any complaints that participants may have against an adjudicator should not be directed to that adjudicator. Instead, participants should speak to the Duty Officer or a member of the ACTDU Executive.